

RELIGION

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Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); May 8, 1982;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1987)

pg. B4

RELIGION

Churches' Battle Against Arms Heats Up

Graham Arrives in Moscow For Peace Conference

By ROBERT GILLETTE,
Times Staff Writer

MOSCOW — Evangelist Billy Graham arrived in the Soviet Union on Friday on a controversial visit to attend international peace conference and to preach the Gospel.

"God and history will judge us if we do not take sensible action against nuclear catastrophe," Graham said in a prepared statement as he arrived at Moscow's Sheremetevo airport.

Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk, head of the Russian Orthodox Church's external affairs department, met Graham, who said he hopes to meet Soviet government officials, as well as religious figures, during his five-day visit here.

Communist Participation

The 63-year-old evangelist is to take part in an anti-nuclear conference for religious leaders that Western diplomats here regard as little more than a Soviet propaganda show. Vice President George Bush reportedly urged Graham, one of America's most influential religious figures, not to lend his prestige to the meeting, which begins Monday.

Soviet Communist Party officials are expected to take part in the meeting, along with members of the official Soviet Peace Committee and

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Billy Graham

about 500 people from about 75 other countries.

Three of about 25 other U.S. church leaders who are delegates issued a joint statement earlier that they "want to take this new opportunity to state clearly our churches' approach to peacemaking."

Called the World Conference of Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life from Nuclear Catastrophe, the four-day meeting is sponsored by the Russian Orthodox Church, whose frequent pronouncements on foreign policy issues invariably conform to Soviet government policy.

"I'll make a bet that there will not

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be one thing said by the Soviet delegation, or in the final (conference) communique, that is inconsistent with Soviet foreign policy," a ranking Western diplomat said Friday.

He and other analysts consider the conference to be part of a major Soviet effort to stop the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's planned deployment of advanced intermediate-range missiles in Europe to counter about 300 Soviet SS-20 missiles now in place.

Graham acknowledged that he had received "high-level opposition" to his attendance at the conference, but he would say only that it was not from President Reagan. He declined to answer other questions from reporters.

No Distance From Conference

Reading his prepared statement as Soviet religious authorities gathered around him in an airport lounge, Graham made no effort to distance himself from the conference.

"I was born, reared and educated in America, and I am a loyal citizen of America," Graham said. "But I also consider myself a member of the world community with responsibilities not only to one nation but to the whole human race.

"As a Christian and a follower of Jesus Christ, I believe the threat of nuclear war is not only a political but a moral and spiritual issue. It is an issue which is concerning me more and more."

The six Siberian Pentecostal Christians who have been living as refugees in the American Embassy for nearly four years also had urged Graham not to attend the conference.

Asked whether Graham would visit the Pentecostals, or call on Jews who have been denied permission to emigrate, one of the evangelist's aides told *The Times* that Graham has reservations about doing so.

Scheduled Appearances

Soviet officials would be "shocked" by such an act, the aide said. He added that "Billy wants to come back here."

Today, Graham is scheduled to meet with Baptist and Russian Orthodox officials, as well as with Georgi Arbatov, head of the Institute of the United States and Canada, a leading Soviet foreign-policy research center.

On Sunday, the Soviet anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany and a major holiday here, Graham will deliver a sermon at Moscow's only Baptist church and preach at a Russian Orthodox church before laying a

wreath on the tomb of the Soviet Union's unknown soldier near the Kremlin wall.

His schedule has not been publicly announced here.

Among U.S. church leaders attending the conference are the chief executives of several denominations, including William P. Thompson of the United Presbyterian Church; the Rev. Avery Post of the United Church of Christ; the Rev. Arie Brouwer of the Reformed Church in America, and Bishop David Preus of the American Lutheran Church.

(The Soviet Union was asked to release all "religious prisoners" in a petition presented April 29 in Washington to Soviet Embassy representatives by the Rev. Carl F. H. Henry, an evangelical leader, and Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman of the Washington Hebrew Congregation. A broad spectrum of American religious leaders signed the petition.

(An accompanying statement by the petitioners did not criticize Graham's trip in Moscow, but hope was expressed that he "will take the opportunity . . . to express concern over the lack of religious freedom in the Soviet Union to his hosts and to the world press."

(Bishop James R. Crumley Jr., head of the Lutheran Church in America who will send a representative to the conference, says he supports the need to raise the question of religious rights but questioned how much opportunity there will be.)